Peggy's Millionaire---By Quiller Couch

"WE must manage it, Peggy. We must do everything nicely. It would be a pleasure to your father, and—it would give Eleanor a chance."

Mrs. Lester looked questioningly at her sturdy second daughter, the anxious lines of her once pretty face deepening as she waited for Pegg's comment.

"Give Eleanor a chance? repeated Peggy vaguely, looking up from the letter in hand. "What do you mean, mother?"

"Mr. Verity is rich—and—surely he could not help admiring Eleanor if—he came here to stay as he suggests; nobody can help it!"

"Oh—oh, yes, of course. I'm afraid my wits were wandering off to the butcher and the wine merchant, and I was thinking of the 'millionaire' only as a serious inconvenience. But if he'll fall in love with our Eleanor and lift her out of the struggle, I shall bless him all my days."

"He admired her at the Ferres' dance, didn't he?"

"I think so. And he seemed quite interested to find that father was at Eton with his father. We had quite a long talk about it—but he never hinted to me he meant to invite himself to stay with us."

"You may be sure he fell in love with Eleanor at first sight," declared Mrs. Lester, with conviction. "And that is why he wants to come. It's the chance of a lifetime for my poor, lovely Eleanor if she will only take it. I do hope she won't be foolish and waste her time flirting with Captain Drayton."

Peggy's brows contracted. "I can't love that man," she said sharply. "I wish Eleanor wouldn't let him haunt the place so."

"You musn't blame your sister if men admire her," protested Mrs. Lester. "It is only natural she should like to talk to a man sometimes!"

"Can't she talk to George Farnham? George is a gentleman at any rate."

"Oh, George is so quiet and dull, and she has known him all her life. I mean a man who admires her."

"Well, I've no time, mother, darling, to worry over Eleanor and her admirers now; for whether we give her to Mr. Verity or not, we should give him something fit to eat. I'm sure Jane wouldn't be able to manage more than three courses for dinner if the skies were to fall; and how Martha is to valet him as well as father, I don't know."

"But you will manage something, won't you, Peggy darling? It may mean so much"——

"Yes, mother," promised Peggy, with a sigh. "And I suppose father can take him off our hands a little."

"Yes, don't worry, darling. If he has your father and Eleanor, he will be quite well taken care of. You really need scarcely appear at all. It's the cooking I am most worried about."

"It's the getting something to cook I'm most worried about," thought Peggy; but she did not utter the words. Aloud she remarked, "Well, if he really is coming this evening I've a busy day before me." And with a smiling nod she hurried off to interview Jane and Martha.

When John Verity entered the shabby beautiful old drawing room at Vendles that Summer evening before dinner his eyes fell upon a graceful figure in a narrow green silk gown lazily playing with a terrier, and he smiled upon it as it rose to greet him. But the smile was inscrutable; even Eleanor's mother could not have said with certainty that the young man's heart was touched. And as the younger daughter of the house did not appear until a few minutes before dinner was announced, she, too, was unable to decide by first signs.

Dinner that evening was a merry meal; and if, as was most unlikely, the thought crossed John Verity's mind that the menu was an extremely simple one, and that one country-looking maid to wait at table was scarcely what might be expected in a mansion the size of Vendles, it certainly did not weigh upon his spirits.

Colonel Lester, though as usual quiet and undemonstrative, was obviously glad to talk to the son of his school hero, Jack Verity. Mrs. Lester found a new comfort and hope in the thought that Eleanor was having a chance. Eleanor, herself, smiled and talked in her most bewitchingly lazy manner, a manner which few men were able to resist. And Peggy, poor, anxious Peggy, was for the time quite gay and sparkling; for the simple meal had been a success, no accidents had happened, and it was too soon to begin to worry about the morrow.

It was not till she was going to bed that her responsibilities returned to her. "What a jolly evening," she thought. "Eleanor looked lovely. Mr. Verity seems such a 'good sort.' He must admire her, surely. Oh"—— with sudden recollection. "Let me see, boots to be cleaned, clothes brushed, bath-water, shaving-water. I'll grind the coffee myself, and make the toast, while Jane cooks the fish"—— and so on, and so on; and Peggy lay down upon her bed almost wishing that the morning had come that she might begin to do things.

"Whatever are you doing, Miss Peggy?"

It was past noon of the following day, and the sun was blazing down, as John Verity leaped over the stile.

Peggy, who had been struggling across the meadow with a large square basket in her arms, bumped it suddenly on the ground and sat on it.

"Oh—I—I was carrying a basket," she gasped, drawing her handkerchief from her pocket and fanning her cheeks.

"Yes, I saw that. But why? It is far to tiring."

"I thought it would be amusing to have a picnic luncheon down by the river. Do you like the idea?"

"Immensely. But why should you be doing the work?"

"I like doing it," declared Peggy boldly. "It doesn't hurt me."

"Well, I, too, like doing it, so we'll do it together."

"But where are the others? Do go back to them."

"They don't want me," he laughed. The Colonel has gone to verify a date"——

"And you left Eleanor alone?"

"No, Captain Drayton is with your sister," he said, his face becoming quickly grave.

Peggy's face fell. "Oh," she thought indignantly, "already that horrible man is spoiling my plan." She longed to say, "Please don't take any notice of Captain Drayton; he is not engaged to Eleanor. We want her to marry you." But in civilized society one cannot say that sort of thing. "I am sure Eleanor would rather you had stayed," was what she really did venture to say.

"I am sure you need me more," he said with a smile, and he pointed to the basket.

Reluctantly she rose, and he lifted it from the ground.

Arrived at the river's bank, Peggy temporarily forgot her anxiety. John Verity was excellent company, nad most useful in helping to lay the cloth beneath the branches of the big beech tree.

"How many knives and forks?" he asked.

"Five," answered Peggy. "Oh, no, I suppose we shall be six if Captain Drayton is here," she added sharply.

"Your voice sounds as if you would rather be five," he laughed. "I thought Captain Drayton was generally a favorite."

"Do you know him?" she asked.

"Just a little, some time ago," he replied quietly.

"He is not a favorite of mine," she declared. "And I don't believe Eleanor wants him."

John Verity did not contradict her, but she could not feel sure that she had convinced him.

"Oh, the annoying way of things," thought poor Peggy. "He probably thinks there is an 'understanding' between them. I do wish Captain Drayton would stay away."

"You will want one more drinking horn, one more knife, fork and spoon—anything else?" he asked. "Tell me, and I will go back to the house with your message."

"No, no, said Peggy hastily. "I would rather go myself."

"Please rest here, and let me be your messenger.

"I can't."

"Please."

"No, I—I want to fetch the things myself."

"Independent person! Do you do it because you have 'views' on 'the whole duty of woman?'"

"No," she said, facing him frankly. "I do it because we have no servant to spare. Martha is busy and tired"——

"Poor Martha," he interrupted kindly. "Then, if you must go, I will go with you, and when the basket is packed I will carry it. I am never so happy as when I am toiling for a reward."

"You call a luncheon a reward?" she laughed.

"I call helping Martha—and you—a reward," he replied, with that inscrutable smile in his eyes.

The picnic by the river was gay and unceremonious, and Peggy felt strangely, unreasonably happy. It seemed to her that she had never enjoyed a picnic so much in all her life before. Even the presence of Captain Drayton could not cloud her pleasure. That bete noir was unusually quiet and thoughtful. Eleanor, herself, looked beautiful in her simple pink muslin gown, her sleepy violet eyes resting smilingly first on one admirer and then on the other. And Peggy hugged to herself the thought of the relief it would be if Eleanor could only make a rich, and at the same time happy, marriage. How it would lift the beauty of the family out of insufficient means. How it would do away with the constant difficulty of getting the longed-for pretty new clothes! How it would enable her to live the happy, luxurious life she was so eminently fitted for!

"Coo-ee!"

They looked up to see a tall figure, riding-whip in hand, crossing the meadow. It was George Farnham.

"How d'ye do," he said as he came near. "I was riding in this direction and thought I would drop in to see how Verity was behaving himself, after his desertion of me." And shaking hands with the ladies of the party and the Colonel, he looked down on Verity, as he sat leaning against a tree trunk and laid his hand on his shoulder. To Captain Drayton he gave merely a curt nod.

"He has managed to make himself one of the family circle," laughed Captain Drayton, rather unpleasantly.

"That's right," said George quietly. "I'm glad I came to witness it."

"And you're just in time to punt mother and me down to Sunningmill," said Peggy.

"Right," said George. "Delighted."

"In riding get-up?" sneered Captain Drayton.

'Yes, in a motor-coat if he thought it would please us," said Peggy sharply.

"What a nice young man!" commented the Captain.

"Yes, I'm a nice young man," said George quietly. "I always come—and go—when I'm wanted to."

Captain Drayton gave an embarrassed laugh.

"Then come now, please, George," said Peggy. In her heart she was thinking—"When father goes back to his study, and mothe rand I leave Eleanor with both of them, Captain Drayton will go home if no one asks him to stay; and then Mr. Verity must fall in love with Eleanor, she is looking so pretty."

What was passing in Mr. Verity's own mind it would be hard to say, but his half-closed eyes followed the trio closely as they made their way to the punt. When they had disappeared round the bend of the stream he brought his attention back to his more immediate surroundings, and saw Eleanor and Captain Drayton gayly playing "conqueror" with the seeded plantain heads within their reach; and poor Peggy's hopes would have sunk if she could have seen the "millionaire" strolling back across the meadow with the Colonel, leaving the players to themselves.

For the first two days of Mr. Verity's visit Peggy was certainly doomed to disappointment. Captain Drayton appeared two or three times a day, with or without an excuse, and the "matrimonial prize" was left chiefly to Peggy herself.

On the second morning after his arrival he came upon her unexpectedly, round by the kitchen garden, brushing his dress coat; and without a word he took the garment out of her hands. Peggy's cheeks blazed with a blush of embarrassment as she looked up at his stern face.

"Why do you do such a thing?" he demanded.

For a moment she hesitated, then, "Because we keep only two maids and no man," she replied defiantly. "We are very poor for such a place as Vendles, Mr. Verity, and so—you see"——

"What I don't see is why you should brush my coat," he said gently. "There's no harm in being poor, goodness knows. Many of my friends are poor; but I don't for that reason let them brush my clothes. Give me the brush, please, and I will do it. And please tell Martha," he continued, his seriousness suddenly vanishing in a smile, "that if she has any wood to be chopped or water carried, I'm the man for her. I've been camping, and I know all about it."

So the awkward moment ended in a laugh, and Peggy and the "millionaire" went in to breakfast the best of friends.

It was on the third day of Mr. Verity's visit that Mrs. Lester's wishes and Peggy's plans began to look hopeful. To everyone's relief (except, perhaps, Eleanor's, and she said nothing), Captain Drayton did not appear. Business called him to London, he had told them. And with a frank simplicity that was as defiant of criticism as if she had been a child Eleanor turned her attention to John Verity.

Peggy watched the change of affairs with delight, but with, at the same time, an inexplicable sinking of the heart.

"I suppose I'm tired," she said to herself impatiently. "It is silly of me to be so dumpy over it, though. And, perhaps, after all, I do miss Mr. Verity's company a little, though I am so glad he is falling in love with Eleanor. It is just a little dull and heating to be fagging round working in this sun. I shall feel better soon."

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and even Wednesday afternoon passed,—Mr. Verity's last day—and Eleanor had not announced that he had made her a proposal of marriage.

"Does he love her, or doesn't he?" Peggy asked herself nervously. "I don't know how he can help himself. Perhaps he is waiting till the very last evening."

George Farnham was dining with them that Wednesday evening, and his eyes followed Eleanor with something of the expression of a faithful dog. To Mrs. Lester and to Peggy George was simply the boy who had grown up within a mile of Vendles, the boy they had always known; but John Verity saw more clearly into his friend's heart, and he also knew its value.

After dinner, when the Colonel had slipped away to his beloved study, and Mrs. Lester was absorbed in a new novel, Eleanor, who all the day had seemed by turns unusually spirited and suddenly distrait, strolled away on the pretext of writing a note. Peggy, left with George and Mr. Verity, sang a few old English songs at their request, and then, lured by the beauty of the twilight garden, went over to the window.

"Let us go out, shall we?" suggested John Verity. "I am sure Mrs. Lester will be quite glad to read her book in peace." And holding his hand to Peggy he helped her (Peggy, who was always helping other people) over the top step from the long window to the terrace, while George Farnham followed them into the fresh air.

Slowly, desultorily, after having dawdled to watch the evening primroses, they strolled away past the gardens and down the avenue till they came to the lodge gates, and, passing through them, stepped out on to the public road.

"There's a train coming through the cutting," remarked George, "we can see it from that gate." And crossing the road they leaned upon the opposite gate and watched the "fiery monster" rounding a corner a mile or so away.

When the train had whirled away out of sight and they had turned to stroll back to the house again, a simple sound caught the attention of practical Peggy.

"That sounds like a horse in Parker's Lane," she said, with mild interest. "What can a horse be doing in the lane now! I wonder if it has got loose from a field, George." And stepping a little apart from the two men, she looked down the narrow lane beside the field across which they had been gazing.

"Why—how extraordinary!" she gasped. In another moment she had disappeared. The two men, puzzled, followed after her.

"Eleanor! Eleanor, what are you doing?"

Peggy ran quickly down the narrow lane, and placed her hand upon the neck of the horse just as Eleanor, in riding habit and covert coat, was about to spring into the saddle.

"Leave me alone!" replied Eleanor, turning to face her sister and the two men, her face as white as death, and her voice angry and trembling. "Go home, please, I can ride if I like, can't I!"

"But why ride at this time, and alone? What does it mean? Your face shows me Eleanor dear, that something is wrong. What has happened, darling? Tell me, what is the trouble?"

"You little fool!" cried Eleanor, quite unlike her usual good-natured self. "Go home. I want to be alone. I want a ride"——

But before she had finished her words the hoofs of another horse were heard coming in the opposite direction. A man was leading the horse—a familiar figure—and suddenly Peggy divined half the truth.

"You are going with Captain Drayton," she said, amazed. "Eleanor, you must not go. Don't be so wrong, so mad. How can you, a lady, do that sort of thing! Come back with me, Eleanor, I shall not leave you, to go riding at night with that man!"

By this time the two other men, suspecting that something was wrong, but not realizing the situation, had drawn near. But the next moment John Verity's mouth straightened and his eyes grew hard, and instead of turning back as he had intended, he came forward.

"I wouldn't go for a ride to-night, Miss Lester, if I were you," he said gravely, "it's a bad light for pits."

"Mr. Verity need not trouble himself about me," said Eleanor, haughtily, "I presume even he has no right to stop me from taking a ride with a friend!"

The other horse and its leader had halted a few yards away in the deep shadow.

"Is Captain Drayton your friend?" said John Verity, with deliberate clearness. "I am sorry."

"Sorry!" cried Eleanor, stung to fury by his words, purposely insulting to the man whom she knew must be listening. "Sorry, are you! Then perhaps," she cried defiantly, as she prepared to spring to her saddle, "you will be even more sorry to hear"—— she paused for a few seconds, but a mad impulse filled her to amaze and hurt and defy them, "that he will soon be my husband, for I am riding off to marry him!"

"Marry him!" cried Peggy hoarsely. "Oh, Eleanor, you are mad, you don't know what you are saying! Come home! I shall fetch father. Eleanor! Eleanor!"

But John Verity had stepped forward sternly, and taking the bridle in his hand, "Don't trouble, Miss Peggy," he said in the same clear voice. "Your sister cannot marry Captain Drayton because—he is a married man already."

White-faced and indignant, Eleanor turned and fronted him. "You"—— she tried to say something to contradict him, to silence him, but her voice failed her.

"If you dno't believe me," said John Verity gently, "we will ask him," and he pointed toward where he knew the cowardly deceiver was lurking. But Eleanor's white hand slipped from the pommel which she had been grasping, and with a heart-breaking little cry she flung it out despairingly toward George Farnham and slipped unconscious to the ground.

The horse and man in the shadow slipped quietly away.

* * * * * *

"She does not love him really; don't believe it. It was his horrible influence! If you love her"——

John Verity held up his hand to check Peggy's impulsive words. "Miss Peggy, don't think me unfeeling, but I do not love your sister."

They had met, these two, in the library before breakfast on the following morning, and Peggy, after a sleepless night, had determined to ease John Verity's heart if possible.

"Ah," she said bitterly, "you are disgusted by that night's scene!"

"No. I admire Miss Lester greatly; but I have never loved her. I couldn't"——

"Because? Because what?"

"Because I love you!"

"Me!"

"Yes, you, you; always you, only you, from the moment you entered the Ferrers' ballroom."

'Me!"

"Yes, you, Peggy, darling, and I want you; I want you more than anything else in the world to say you will try to love me."

For minutes Peggy stared at him, and her brain seemed to whirl round and round. Then quite suddenly everything seemed to grow clear and still, and coming close to him she looked into his face with a great amazement.

"Why—why," she said in an awed whisper, "I verily believe I have been loving you for days!"

"It seems unfeeling, almost cruel, to be happy when Eleanor is suffering so," said Peggy, coming back to the trouble after half an hour of perfect happiness.

"Peggy dear, shall I tell you something?"

"Yes," said Peggy.

"Did you happen to notice Farnham's face when Eleanor turned on us last night?"

"No," declared Peggy, "I saw only Eleanor's."

"Well, there was love on his face if ever there was on any man's, and, judging from the way she turned to him—not to you or to me—when the blow fell, I feel sure, certain, positive, that in time she will be almost (but not quite) as happy as you are, my Peggy, and George will be as proud and grateful as your own lover."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Peggy. "It isn't a bit as I planned it; but it seems quite as good."

"It seems to me a million times better," laughed John Verity, and he held her closely to him.

War Considered from a New Standpoint---By Prof. Guglielmo Ferrero.

FEW books on military science are being written to-day and fewer still are the readers among the educated, outside of the restricted groups of scientific professional soldiers. Even the history of wars themselves has been utterly neglected in the general unpopularity of historical study caused by that unfortunate scholastic influence which has made of history, as taught to-day, a false, unnatural and meaningless science. It is most unfortunate, for in an age when public opinion has so commanding an influence upon the affairs of state, it is essential that there should be among the educated and influential class at least, some conception of things military—enough at any rate to enable one to understand what is going on in time of war—knowledge which can only be acquired in time of peace by reading the history of wars long past.

This is the only way in which such knowledge can be obtained, and it is not a difficult one—when you have the right books. War is difficult to carry on, but easy enough to understand when others are carrying it on; for among all historical phenomena it is the simplest. There are certain elemental psychological forces which find their expression in war, the instinct of self-preservation and the passions which make a man rise above it; boldness and humility, daring and timidity, patience and rashness. These feelings arise alternately from weakness or strength, from success or failure. It is not difficult, therefore, for an educated man, somewhat versed in the study of man and his conduct, to arrive at a proper conception of the cause and results of war, if they are intelligently presented. But wars, as a rule, are not intelligently, truthfully and rationally presented to the general readers of intelligence. Especially is this true of modern wars.

The general reader cannot easily study the history of the Franco-Prussian War in such a way that he may apply its lesson to his own country, to the situations which confront him to-day, and which he is called upon, more or less, as a citizen of a democratic country to decide. Still less easy is it to study the lessons of that vast, widespread and long-ending conflict—the American war of secession. We know that in some way that conflict was followed by the most amazing material development the world has ever seen—I refer to the development of the United States within the past generation. How many educated men can explain how the war was related to that development and what the really good or evil results of the war may have been?

Military history needs to be written in a new way. Our educated classes, as a rule, have an entirely wrong conception of war, whether they take the romantic view of the subject or the peace propaganda.

Our military leaders have failed to give civilians any kind of condensed military instruction—and some such basis is absolutely necessary if we are to make any judgment in the matter at all. It is a curious fact and one of the most bizarre in the extraordinary, fantastic age in which we live, that the only book of recent years adequately chronicling for or- history of the wars of the nineteenth century (the most warlike century, par excellence, in the history of the world) is the work of a man whose life has been devoted to the peace propaganda in Italy—Ernest Theodore Moneta. True, he was an officer and saw service, an excellent training for a historian. In any case, his volumes on "War and Peace in the Nineteenth Century" are a mine of information which should be carefully studied by all who really wish to understand thoroughly the great movements which, through war, have made Europe what it is to-day.

Doubtless there are many valuable studies upon military history recently published by officers of high rank in various armies. But all these works are prepared for the initiated, and not for us ordinary mortals, to whom they are of little or no use. It may be a profitable suggestion to such of these experts as are able to write books of general interest that we need some information on their specialty.

In periods of prolonged peace there is widely diffused among educated readers, through the vehicle of literature, a kind of romantic love for war, which is not at times without its real perils to the nations.

Parlor poets and philosophers talk of war without knowing what they are talking of—as "the mother of heroes and valor," "the tie that binds classes and masses," "the revivifying force of nations weakened by peace, prosperity and pleasure." Whoever knows of war, through experience or study, knows it is indeed a "tie" sometimes necessary, but, like the handcuff, not always enobling. Victory exalts, defeat depresses, disturbs and unsettles a nation for several generations. Defeat and victory are not necessarily the certain rewards of vice and virtue respectively, or of cowardice and bravery. Fortune is a mysterious compound of unknown forces which blindly and capriciously scatters its favors. The miseries of defeat fall not always to the lot of those who have earned punishment most richly, nor do the great rewards always fall to those who have most deserved them.

A successful war may strengthen a weak government; and this is really an advantage if the government wisely used the prestige thus acquired. But a society profoundly undermined by egoism, pride and capricious tyrannies, which have become the common defects of its ruling classes, will not be regenerated by a war, unless that war uproots, destroys or disperses that very ruling class and puts another in its place. But then it is no longer a war; it is a revolution—really and truly a revolution — and history records very few real revolutions.

A good military literature would be an excellent antidote to the romantic fantasies widely prevalent on the subject of war. It would teach that if war is, as Theodore Roosevelt said, "not the worst of evils," if it may be, at some critical time, a vital necessity—it is always an evil and a very terrible necessity. To meet such a crisis as it presents with resolution, courage and skill, is a duty; but to provoke it lightly is a crime, which is the more easy to commit in proportion as the continued duration of peace effaces the memories of war's horrors, responsibilities and dangers.

There is another misconception, very much diffused throughout our somewhat mechanical civilization, which such books could dispel or correct. I allude to the belief that war has to-day become a science, governed by precise and well-defined rules; and that in this modern game of mathematical precision, the perfection of equipment is the deciding factor. It is a perverted desire of our modern life to reduce everything to a scientific basis, to multiply schools and books; and mechanicians are so powerful, and so enterprising in our civilization, that this misconception has sunk its roots deeply and firmly into our minds, even in those of thinkers and students.

But it is a dangerous error. It deceives the many into believing that the high development of modern arms and equipment is a certain assurance of victory—when, in fact, it is only a very uncertain aid to an army which must depend upon other conditions for its efficiency.

When any war commences every one guesses, more or less capriciously, according to his sympathies or interests, what the result will be. As one of the two opposing sides must win, there must always be a number of successful—or lucky—prophets.

But no one can know, when a war begins, where it will end; and in which way the victor will achieve his success. There must logically always be a large margin allowed for the unforeseen, the unknown. To consider these contingencies is a duty no less of the government which carries on a war than of the public which must sustain it by its approval and support. To neglect this duty is to open the door to frightful dangers when any one's country enters upon war.